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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 550

By Herron

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Mr. Ray Champine for meritorious service and bravery.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that this legislative body honor those persons who through their personal endeavors are credits to their country, their respective families and communities, and to this state, and

WHEREAS, our country was conceived by individuals willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure this nation's freedom and the Volunteer State is especially proud to have so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty in service of their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Tennesseans have always been willing to put aside their own personal safety and comfort to help someone desperately in need; and

WHEREAS, Ray Champine is one such outstanding individual who has served with courage and gallantry and deserves proper recognition for his heroism; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Champine is a Vietnam veteran who is retired from the Army after serving with great bravery and ability; he is now serving his twelfth year with the United States Postal Service; and

WHEREAS, Ray Champine proudly carries the titles of husband, father, grandfather, postman, and now hero after the fateful afternoon of December 7, 1999; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Champine was delivering the mail on his postal route in Martin, Tennessee when he noticed smoke coming from the home of Golsby Gatewood; and

WHEREAS, after the elderly resident failed to answer his calls, Mr. Champine did not hesitate to take action; Ray Champine immediately broke a window in the front door and crawled into the burning house; and

WHEREAS, determined to reach Mr. Gatewood, Ray Champine placed his own life in great jeopardy and actually went through the fire to find Mr. Gatewood on his bed; and

WHEREAS, Captain Dickie Hart of the Martin Fire Department was the first firefighter to arrive on the scene, along with members of the Martin Police Department, Capt. Hart joined MPD Capt. Don Teal at the back of the house and kicked down the door, rescuing both Mr. Champine and Mr. Gatewood; and

WHEREAS, according to Capt. Hart, if Mr. Champine and Mr. Gatewood had remained in the house for another 30 seconds, neither one of them would have survived; and

WHEREAS, as a result of Mr. Champine's courageous efforts, he suffered serious injuries that required hospitalization; and

WHEREAS, a truly humble man, Ray Champine shrugs off his bravery and new hero status by saying, "I want everyone to know I was not alone. If it had not been for the fire department, police department, paramedics, and neighbors, it might have been a different story"; and

WHEREAS, he feels fortunate to share love and companionship with Sara, his wife of 39 years, and their children, Steven and Kathy Champine Miles, and grandchildren Bryan and Bradley; and

WHEREAS, during his spare time he is an avid sports enthusiast, and also enjoys gardening; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Champine acted to save a human life with the utmost skill, dedication and selflessness; his service can only be categorized as outstanding; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and commend Mr. Ray Champine of Martin, Tennessee for his meritorious service and unsurpassed bravery, and offer our thanks for a job well done.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.